Act.33

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YOU REALLY OKAY WITH THIS?
Greater Kanto Public Welfare Ministry Narcotics Control Division
YOU'VE DONE A GOOD JOB RESTRAINING YOURSELF FROM LOOKING INTO THIS ONE!
YUP.
SINCE IT WAS A SIMPLE FIRST OFFENSE, SHINODA GOT AN EARLY RELEASE BY COURT ORDER.
SHINODA... WAS HE THE GUY WE CAUGHT BUYING FROM THE DEALER WE BUSTED?
RESTRAIN-ING...?

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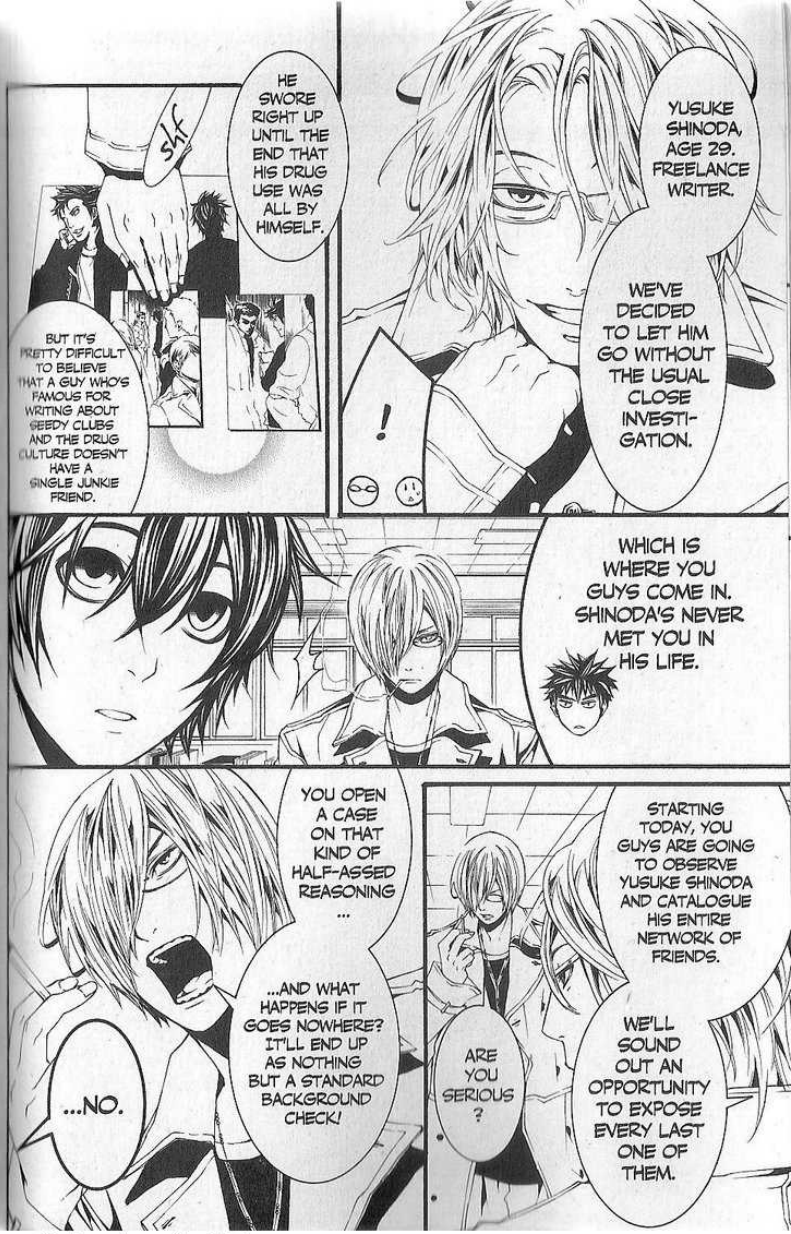
NO, IT WON'T.
...
IF IT TURNS OUT TO BE TRUE...
...THEY MIGHT ACTUALLY BE HEADING INTO A DANGEROUS SITUATION.
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL THEM ABOUT THE ANONYMOUS TIP?
WE DO HAVE TO LOOK INTO WHETHER OR NOT THAT TIP IS LEGIT.
I DON'T WANT THEM CONDUCTING AN INVESTIGATION WITH ANY PRECONCEPTIONS.
BUT AT THIS STAGE, IT'S NOTHING MORE THAN A SUPPOSITION FROM AN UNKNOWN, UNVERIFIED SOURCE.
IF SHINODA REALLY IS INVOLVED WITH THAT "RED" BUSINESS, IT'LL COME OUT IN THE WASH.


HE SWORE RIGHT UP UNTIL THE END THAT HIS DRUG USE WAS ALL BY HIMSELF.
BUT IT'S PRETTY DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT A GUY WHO'S FAMOUS FOR WRITING ABOUT SEEDY CLUBS AND THE DRUG CULTURE DOESN'T HAVE A SINGLE JUNKIE FRIEND.
YUSUKE SHINODA, AGE 29. FREELANCE WRITER.
WE'VE DECIDED TO LET HIM GO WITHOUT THE USUAL CLOSE INVESTIGATION.
!
WHICH IS WHERE YOU GUYS COME IN. SHINODA'S NEVER MET YOU IN HIS LIFE.
YOU OPEN A CASE ON THAT KIND OF HALF-ASSED REASONING ...
...AND WHAT HAPPENS IF IT GOES NOWHERE? IT'LL END UP AS NOTHING BUT A STANDARD BACKGROUND CHECK!
...NO.
STARTING TODAY, YOU GUYS ARE GOING TO OBSERVE YUSUKE SHINODA AND CATALOGUE HIS ENTIRE NETWORK OF FRIENDS.
ARE YOU SERIOUS?
WE'LL SOUND OUT AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPOSE EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM.

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I GOTTA ADMIT, I 'BOUT LOST IT WHEN I HEARD YOU'D BEEN HAULED IN.
C'MON, KATSUKI.
DID YOU REALLY THINK I'D SQUEAL ON MY GOOD BUDDY?
GIVE ME A LITTLE CREDIT.
sorry
sorry
THE NCD IS KINDA DULL. I MEAN...
TO BE HONEST, IT WAS A BIT OF A LETDOWN.
NO WAY.
BUT YOU DON'T THINK THEY'LL BE WATCHING YOU IN CASE YOU COMMIT, LIKE, A SECOND OFFENSE?
I OUTLASTED 'EM. NO SWEAT.
AND IN THE END, THEY JUST RAN OUT OF PATIENCE.
EVEN DURING THE QUESTIONING, I JUST KEPT DENYING THAT I HAD ANY FRIENDS INVOLVED.

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What are you doing, Mr. Arai?!
HIKI'S DEFINITELY HIDING SOMETHING, THAT BASTARD.
shuu
YOU'RE DRINKING TOO MUCH AND YOU'RE SMOKING TOO MUCH! Stop it!
I'LL THANK YOU NOT TO GET IN MY WAY. Otherwise I'll kill you
smirk
fwip
mmphW
grab
suu
click
"IT'LL ALL COME OUT IN THE WASH."
BWAHAHA
AND THEN THEY WERE ALL, "YOU STAY OUTTA HERE, YOU GOT THAT?"
!
shiver shiver
hmph
pffff
MR. ARAI--
ANOTHER ROUND, PLEASE.
sigh
UH... NOT REALLY ...
Orange Juice
Trying (and failing) to talk like an office worker.
gulp
IS THAT SO, MR. FURUTA? ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T HAVE SOME ISSUE WITH THIS JOB ITSELF?
Blah
Blah
BECAUSE I RESPECT MY SUPERIORS, YOU SEE, I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL IRRITATED AT THOSE RUDE FELLOWS, THOUGH WATCHING THEM MAY BE OUR JOB.

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LOOKS LIKE HE'S ON HIS BEST BEHAVIOR. NO SURPRISE THERE.
batan
HITTING THE BAR AND HEADING STRAIGHT HOME, EH?
shuff
shuff
HOW MANY PEOPLE DO YOU THINK WE'LL HAVE TO TRACK DOWN TO ACCOUNT FOR ALL OF SHINODA'S GROUP?
squirm
squirm
WE'VE GOT HIS PARENTS LIVING ELSEWHERE, HIS YOUNGER BROTHER AND TEN-ODD PEOPLE FROM HIS JOB.
PLUS HIS FRIENDS FROM SCHOOL AND THE GROUP HE HANGS OUT WITH NOW--AND THOSE'RE JUST THE ONES WE KNOW ABOUT.
THE REAL PROBLEM IS THE RANDOM PEOPLE THAT SHOW UP AT THAT NAMELESS CLUB.
SO WHEN'RE YOU GONNA HEAD OUT TO--
zzzzz
...
sonuva...
hmph

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flop
SHINODA DIDN'T DO ANYTHING PARTICULARLY SPECIAL TODAY.
...EAH, PROB-ABLY.
YEAH, PROB-ABLY.
HE STICKS OUT TOO MUCH.
FZZT
...DIDN'T... BETTER QUIT...THE IRANIAN...
STILL, IF WE'RE CAREFUL IT SHOULD BE OKAY.
IF YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT THE CONTENTS, I CAN INTRODUCE YOU TO A GOOD JAPANESE BUYER.
YEAH, MAYBE.
YEAH, MAYBE.
COMING THROUGH LOUD AND CLEAR.
TOMORROW ? IN THE EVENING THEN...

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HE'S THE DEALER? HE LOOKS LIKE A TOTAL LOSER.
THOSE SKINNY ARMS WOULD BE EASY TO BREAK.
HE'S YOUNGER THAN I IMAGINED.
I KNOW!
ACTUALLY HISATO HERE IS STILL IN HIS TEENS!
squeaky clean!
YOU DON'T TRUST A MINOR?
NO, IT'S NOT THAT.
slf
I'D KILL MYSELF IF THEY TRACED ME THROUGH A KID LIKE THIS.
I JUST WANNA GET THIS OVER WITH...
slff
WSP
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
I CAN GET YOU ANYTHING.
!

WAIT, THAT'S A MAN ?!
smells nice...
OH, ME TOO ...
SORRY, SHINODA.
!
THE JAPANESE GUY I TOLD YOU ABOUT ON THE PHONE.
HUH?
AW, DON'T BE LIKE THAT. I BROUGHT HIM WITH ME, SEE?
YOU SURE TOOK YOUR TIME IN THE BATHROOM.

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...
HE JUST CHECKED INTO A PRETTY NICE HOTEL WITH HIS BUDDIES.
AH, GOOD WORK.
YEAH, PROBABLY TO PARTY WITH THE STUFF THEY JUST PICKED UP.
A NICE HOTEL?
WHAT'S GOING ON WITH SHINODA?

THERE IS A LIMIT TO HOW GOOD-FOR-NOTHING YOU CAN BE!
SLAM
I LOST THEM... AND THEN I TRIED TO FIND YOU, BUT I COULDN'T... AND IT'S DARK AND I COULDN'T SEE YOUR FACE...
sorry...

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SURE, I'LL CALL THEM UP.
WHAT'S THE HOTEL'S NAME? ...GOT IT.
GIVE MY NAME TO THE FRONT DESK IN FIVE MINUTES.
WE DON'T KNOW WHEN THEY'RE GONNA BE HERE AGAIN, SO I WANT TO FOLLOW THIS UP.
AH HA HA.
YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME OUT.
...
beep
WHO DID YOU CALL?
kachuk
???
THE EMPEROR OF THE GODDAMN UNDER-WORLD, THAT'S WHO.

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RECENTLY WE'VE FOUND SOME NEW WAYS TO HAVE FUN, SO IT HASN'T BEEN ALL BAD.
OTHER WAYS TO HAVE FUN?
FREEE
SINCE YOU'VE BEEN AWAY, WE DECIDED TO BE A LOT MORE CAREFUL.
UH, YEAH... SINCE WHEN HAVE YOU GUYS BEEN DOING THIS?
KACHAK
DON'T WORRY, YOU'LL LOVE IT.
!
THE GUYS ARE ALREADY AT IT.
SHHH
SHHH
SHHH

...THANKS.
YOUR ROOM IS NUMBER 4022. ON THE FOURTH FLOOR.
SHIFF
ENJOY YOUR STAY.
4023
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE EVER COME HERE, ISN'T IT?
...
Room 4023 is a twin room reserved under the name of Mr. Masahito Katsuki.

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YOU LIKED HIM WELL ENOUGH WHEN YOU SAW HIM BEFORE, RIGHT?
LET'S GIVE HIM A GO.
!
WE'LL JUST LIGHT UP SOME BUD...
...AND HAVE A GOOD TIME.
BIT
...AND HAVE A GOOD TIME.
...

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DON'T SWEAT IT.
4023
SHINODA JUST GOT OUT, SO HE'S GONNA BE TWITCHY ABOUT ALL KINDS OF STUFF.
...
OKAY.
pata
pata
TCH.
BESIDES --
HE'S NOT GONNA WANT TO GET BUSTED AGAIN FOR CAUSING A RUCKUS IN A PLACE LIKE THIS.
FINE, FINE. YOU GUYS ARE A TOUGH CROWD.
shuff
THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT, KATSUKI, BRINGING SHINODA ALONG.
GO GET US SOME SECONDS OR SOME-THING.
DAMMIT, I WAS ALL HOT TOO.
--I WONDER IF HE REALLY FELL FOR THE KID... WITH THAT FACE AND ALL.
KLAK

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THANKS A HEAP.
...
shuf
SOME FRIENDS YOU HAVE.
SINCE YOU SAVED ME, SHINODA, I'LL LET YOU HAVE 'EM CHEAP.
!
IT LOOKS LIKE I LEFT MY HOUSE KEY IN THE ROOM...
What am I gonna do?
I REALLY LOST IT...
fwump
fwump
I DAMN WELL DON'T WANT TO GET INVOLVED IF I CAN HELP IT.
shuh... shuh...
WHAT'D BE THE POINT OF ASKING?
HEY... YOU HAVEN'T REALLY ASKED ABOUT ME, MUCH.
slump
IT'S BACK IN THE ROOM.
SO THESE ARE, WHAT, MOSTLY UPPERS?
YEAH.
skf
...
STARTING IN THIS BUSINESS A MONTH AGO... YOU PROBABLY DON'T HAVE A CLUE HOW IMPORTANT CONNEC-TIONS ARE.
THANKS TO YOU, I'M IN TROUBLE WITH MY FRIENDS.
HOLDING THEM OFF WAS A ONE-TIME THING, GOT THAT?

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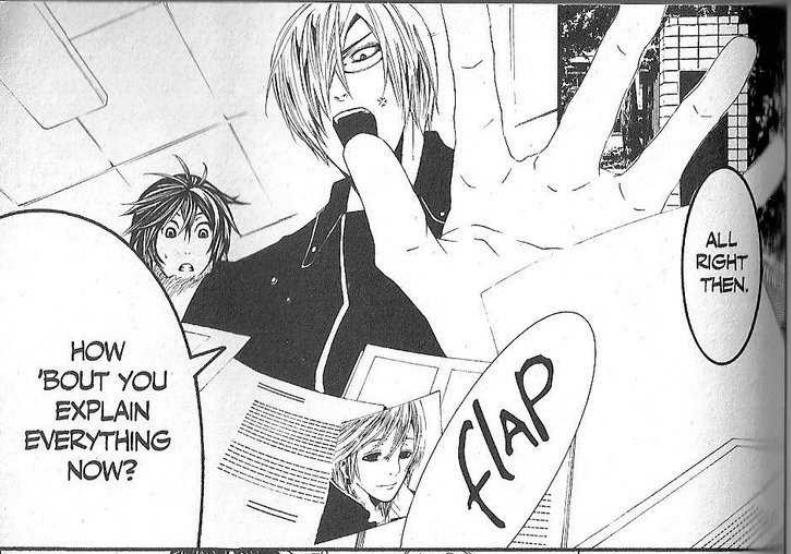
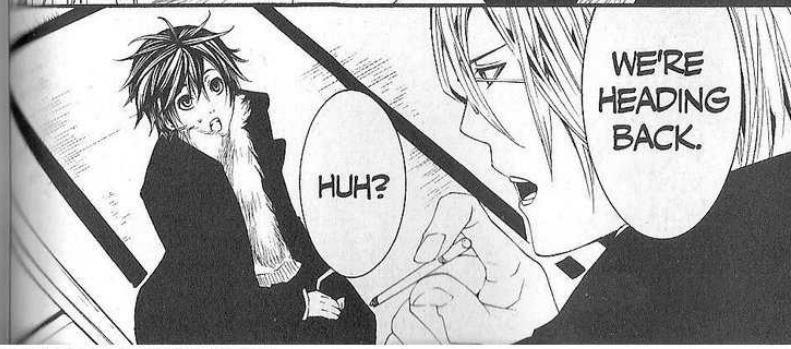


YOU KNEW ALL ALONG THAT IF WE FOLLOWED SHINODA, RED WAS GONNA SHOW UP, DIDN'T YOU?
DON'T BE MAD AT ME.
I DIDN'T WANT TO SEND YOU IN THERE WITH ANY PRECONCEPTIONS BY GIVING YOU UNSUBSTANTIATED IDEAS.
KAJI --
IT LOOKS LIKE OUR THEORY HAS TURNED TO FACT.
LOOKS LIKE IT.



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--KILLED HIS WIFE, DAUGHTER AND PARENTS BEFORE COMMITTING SUICIDE.
A MAN WHO HAD OVERDOSED ON THE DRUG--
BUT LARGE NUMBERS OF THE RED PACKETS WERE FOUND AT HIS RESIDENCE.
IT HASN'T BEEN MADE PUBLIC YET...
chik
ONCE WE'D CONFIRMED HOW DANGEROUS IT REALLY WAS, WE STARTED AN INVESTIGATION WITH SECTION 2, BUT IT WASN'T GOING ANYWHERE.
USE AMONG THE YOUNGER GENERATION SEEMS TO BE RISING, PROBABLY BECAUSE OF ITS LOW PRICE.
WHICH IS WHERE SHINODA'S ARREST CAME IN.
THERE'S A STRONG POSSIBILITY OF SIDE EFFECTS SUCH AS HALLUCINATIONS DUE TO THE HIGH IMPURITY OF THE DRUG.

WHAT'S THIS "RED" STUFF ANYWAY?
IT'S A DRUG THAT STARTED CIRCULATING THIS LAST YEAR.
"REDS" OR "LITTLE REDDIES" ARE GENERAL TERMS FOR STIMULANTS IN RED-COLORED PILLS.
"RED" IS ESSENTIALLY A NICKNAME. THE STUFF'S SOLD IN THESE RED PACKAGES.
THAT'S ALL WE KNOW BASED ON WHAT WE'VE LEARNED FROM THE STUFF WE CONFISCATED IN A FEW ARRESTS.
WE DON'T KNOW MANY DETAILS.
SOUNDS PRETTY MINOR LEAGUE.
!
WE HAD A BREAK-THROUGH INCIDENT SIX MONTHS AGO.
HOWEVER --

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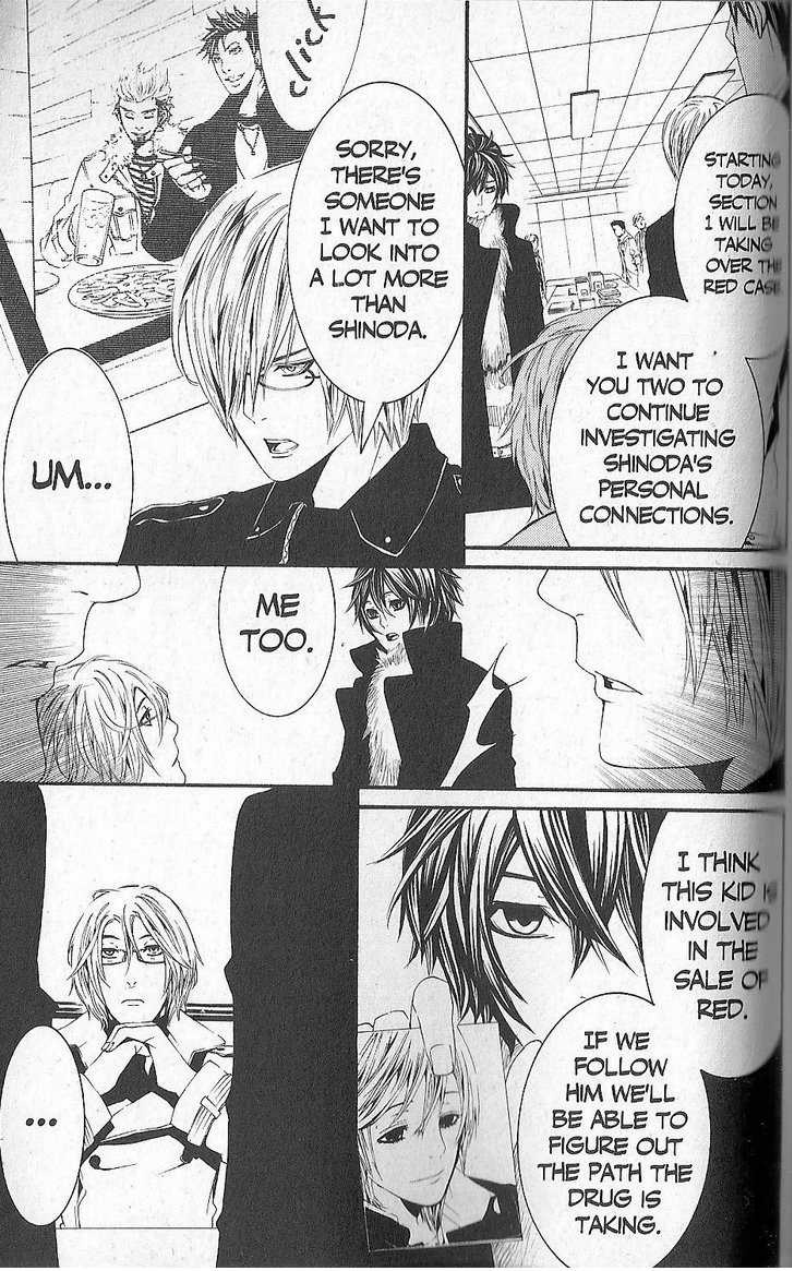
click
SORRY, THERE'S SOMEONE I WANT TO LOOK INTO A LOT MORE THAN SHINODA.
UM...
STARTING TODAY, SECTION 1 WILL BE TAKING OVER THE RED CASE
I WANT YOU TWO TO CONTINUE INVESTIGATING SHINODA'S PERSONAL CONNECTIONS.
ME TOO.
...
I THINK THIS KID IS INVOLVED IN THE SALE OF RED.
IF WE FOLLOW HIM WE'LL BE ABLE TO FIGURE OUT THE PATH THE DRUG IS TAKING.

SO YOU PUT US ON A CASE WITHOUT HAVING ANY IDEA WHO THE TARGET WOULD WIND UP BEING?
WE WERE ONLY HALF CONVINCED, BUT WE DECIDED TO LET SHINODA GO AND SEE WHAT HAPPENED.
glare
IT WAS JUST AN ANONYMOUS TIP.
THE PERSON YOU'RE HOLDING, YUSUKE SHINODA, IS INVOLVED WITH RED.
flick
chak
WE DECIDED THAT THE POSSIBILITY THAT YOU TWO WOULD BE PUT IN DANGER WAS RELATIVELY SMALL.
SORRY ABOUT THAT.
BASED ON THE LOW CREDIBILITY OF THE TIP...
BUT YOU TWO FOUND IT.
AT THE VERY LEAST, THERE WAS NO HARD PROOF THAT SHINODA HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH RED PRIOR TO HIS ARREST.

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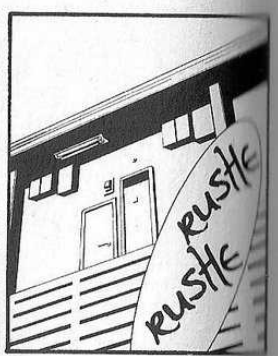

nod
OKAY.
IF WE FIND ANYTHING OUT WE'LL CONTACT YOU IMMEDIATELY. DON'T DO ANYTHING STUPID.
WE'LL LOOK INTO THESE GUYS FROM OUR SIDE.

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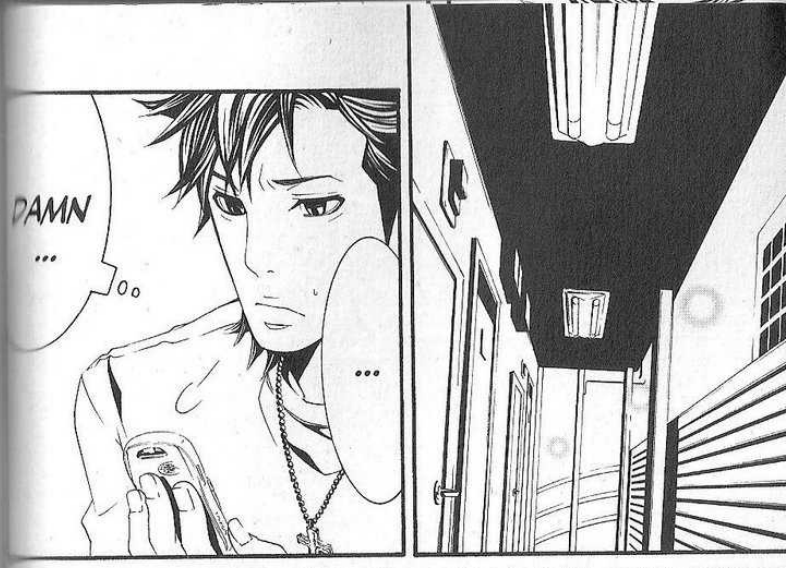

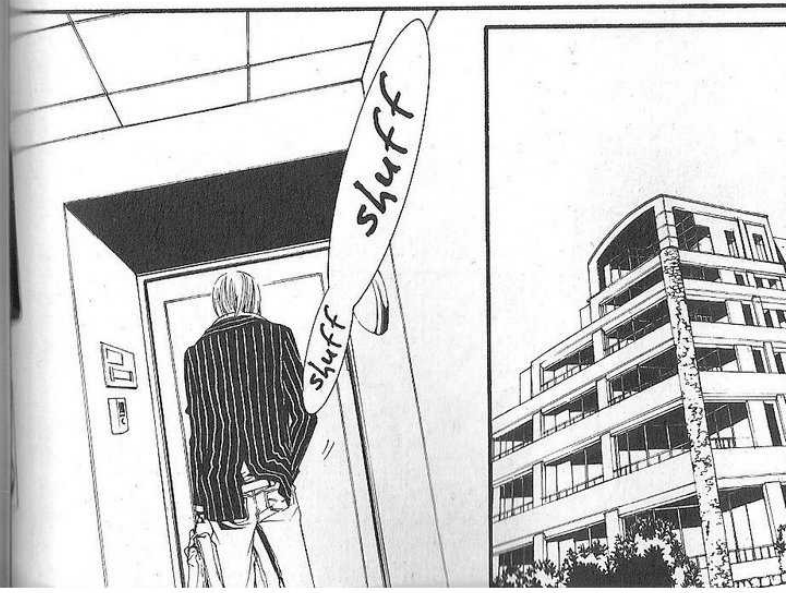

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'S CHILLY DOWN HERE.
SHOKI...
...
SNUG
IF YOU SLEEP ON THE FLOOR LIKE THIS, YOU'RE GONNA CATCH A COLD.
NO KIDDIN'.
IT'S SO COLD DOWN HERE I THOUGHT I WAS GONNA DIE.
...
SNUGG
LIKE MY BODY WAS JUST GOING TO MELT ONTO THE FLOOR.
DON'T SAY STUFF LIKE THAT.
!

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HUH?
LIKE I SAID, SINCE YOU GOT ARRESTED AND ALL, MAYBE IT'D BE SOME GOOD EXPERIENCE FOR YOU.
YOU COULD WRITE A KIND OF DOCUMENTARY PIECE... GOING FROM DRUG USE, TO ARREST, TO FREEDOM. IT'D MAKE A GREAT ARTICLE.
WELL... I GUESS...
IT MIGHT BE INTERESTING, BUT I DON'T WANT THOSE BASTARDS TO HAVE THEIR EYES ON ME AGAIN.
I'D HAVE TO CHANGE MY PEN NAME OR SOME-THING...
YOU CAN'T DO THAT!
YOU'VE ALREADY ESTABLISHED YOUR NAME AS A FAMOUS DRUG WRITER.
YOU'VE GOTTEN QUITE A REPUTATION FOR DOCUMENTING YOUR TRIPS, MAN.
WELL, Y'KNOW, COOL, BUT...
Vrrrrr
SORRY, I'VE GOT A CALL ON THE OTHER LINE. I'LL CALL YOU BACK.
Incoming Call
THE OTHER LINE?
Vrrrrr
Vrrrrr

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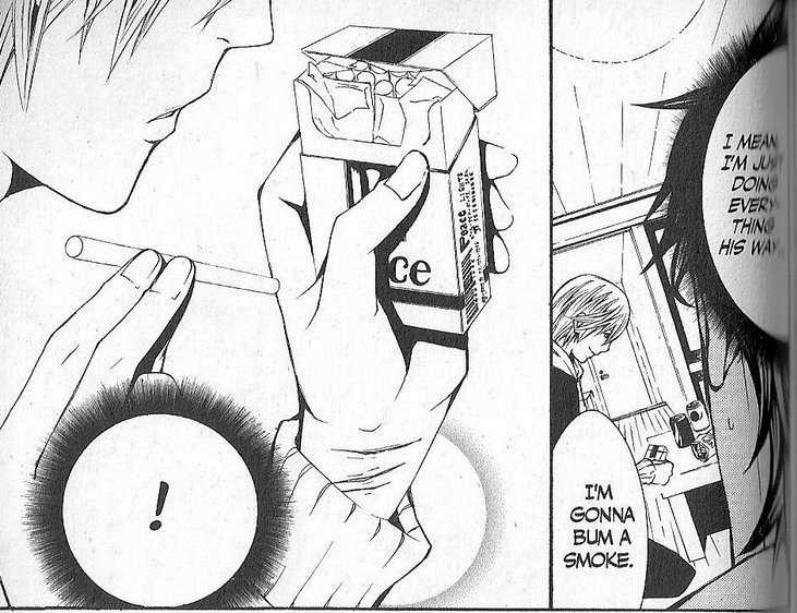

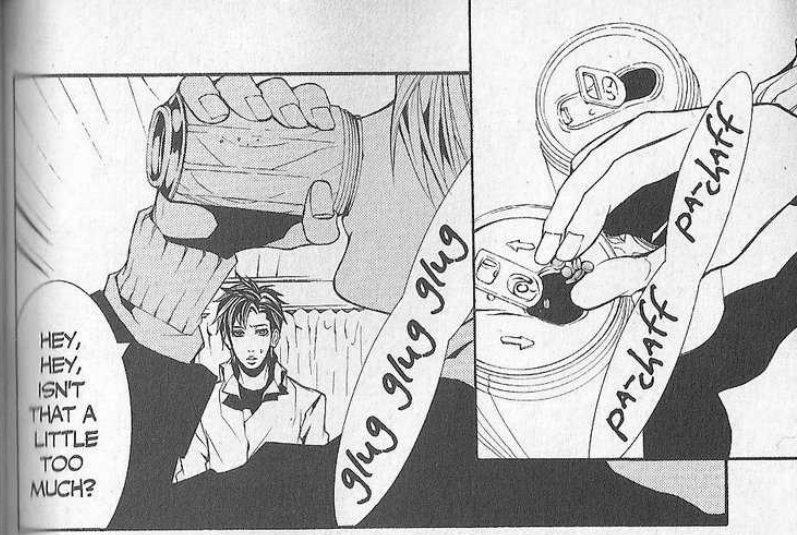

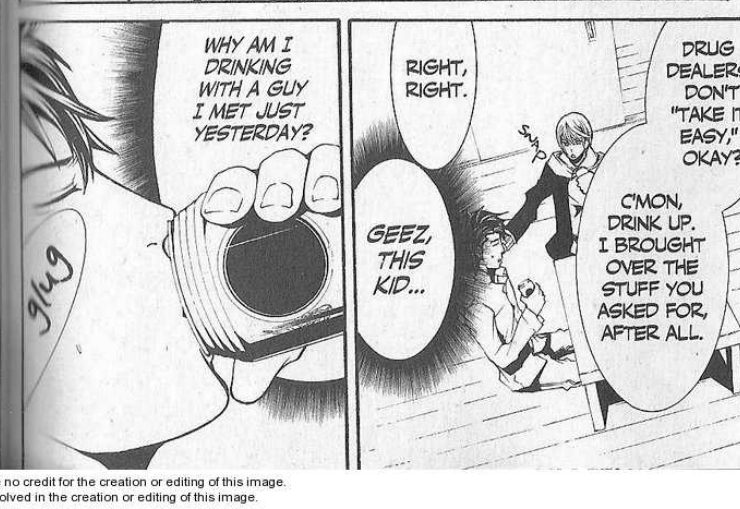
WHY AM I DRINKING WITH A GUY I MET JUST YESTERDAY?
glug
RIGHT, RIGHT.
GEEZ, THIS KID...
DRUG DEALERS DON'T "TAKE IT EASY," OKAY?
C'MON, DRINK UP. I BROUGHT OVER THE STUFF YOU ASKED FOR, AFTER ALL.

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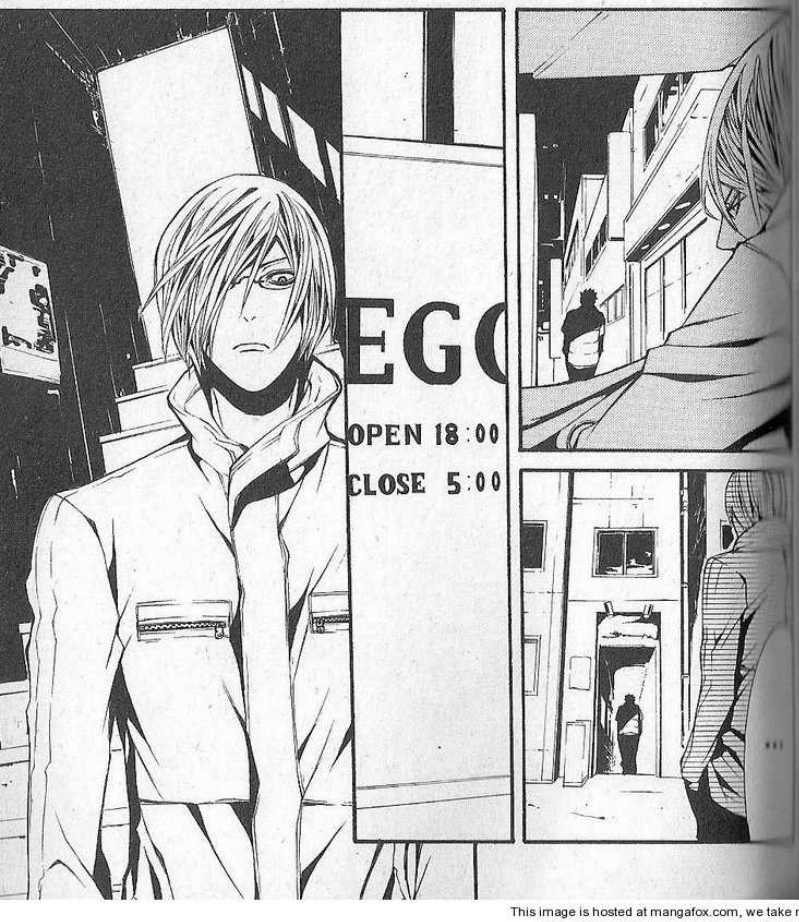

HUH?
STOP BEING SO ROUND-ABOUT.
ARE ALL WRITERS LIKE THAT?
SO?
DO YOU WANT TO KNOW OR NOT?
WELL, I WON'T SAY NO, BUT... IT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS ...

SHINO," THE DRUG SCENE WRITER WHO'LL ONLY WRITE ABOUT DRUGS HE'S PERSONALLY TRIED...
HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT I DO?
I KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU.

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IT'S KATSUKI! WHAT THE HELL'S HE DOING HERE?
HM?
HE CAN'T BE THE ONE WHO GAVE THE KID A RIDE EARLIER... CAN HE?
KATSUKI TOLD YOU?
HE TALKS ABOUT YOU ALL THE TIME.
YUP. HE'S IN THE BUSINESS TOO, AFTER ALL.
I THOUGHT I'D REALLY LIKE TO MEET YOU, SO I WENT OUT LAST NIGHT TO HAVE A LITTLE FUN...
THAT'S A LIE.
HUH?!
ACTUALLY, I READ YOUR ARTICLES AND REALLY LIKED THEM, SO I STARTED ASKING AROUND.
THAT WAS "A LITTLE FUN," HUH?
RERING

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hmph
DAMN RIGHT.
WELL, NOW.
YOU'RE PRETTY TOUCHY FOR SOMEONE GETTING THIS FAR.
HOW DO I KNOW YOU'RE NOT A COP OR A NARC?
YOU THINK I'M GONNA TELL YOU THE NAME OF MY FRIEND WHEN I'VE NEVER MET YOU BEFORE? DO I LOOK CRAZY?
...
I'LL CHANGE THE QUESTION THEN.
WHAT'D YOUR "FRIEND" SAY YOU'D BE ABLE TO BUY HERE?
REEEE
GOT IT IN ONE.
THE RED ONES.

A SECRET EVENT?
OPEN 18:00
CLOSE 5:00
THAT'S NOT WHAT I HEARD.
I HEARD YOU COULD GET SOME GOOD STUFF HERE ON WEDNESDAY NIGHTS.
THEN YOUR BUDDY'S BEEN SCREWIN' WITH YOU.
...
THAT'S ONLY HALF-TRUE. THIS PLACE ISN'T THAT SIMPLE, AFTER ALL.
hmph
YOU GOTTA BE KIDDIN' ME.
PEOPLE IN A THING LIKE THIS ARE TOUCHY-- YOU DON'T GET IN UNLESS YOU'VE BEEN PROPERLY INTRODUCED.
IS THERE SOME REASON I SHOULD TELL YOU?
YEAH, THERE IS.
WHAT'S YOUR FRIEND'S NAME?

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SAY "AAH."
...
HEY...
WILL YOU WRITE SOME-THING ABOUT THESE?
203
Shinoda
YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE HAVING A GOOD TIME.
I DON'T WANT THE NCD BREATHIN' DOWN MY NECK ANY MORE. HEE HEE HEE.
YEAH, THANKS TO YOU.
THE RED ONES, I MEAN.
C'MON, GIVE ME A BREAK.
HEY, KNOCK IF OFF. THAT TICKLES.
SLURP
SLF
...
I DON'T CARE IF IT'S WITH A GUY OR A GIRL, LONG AS IT FEELS GOOD.
YOU KNOW, I...
GIVE ME ONE.
SURE, HERE.
SLF
HEY, SHINODA.
ACTUALLY I WANTED TO REPAY THE FAVOR A BIT MORE.
OH NO, I THINK THIS PLUS THE BOOZE HAS YOU COVERED.

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IF YOU'RE GONNA DO IT, DO IT QUICK.
SHUP
JUST LIKE THE RUMORS! HE'LL LET ANYONE GIVE IT A SHOT!
SHUU
Ha ha ha ha
I HAVE NO BODY, NO MIND.
Ha ha ha ha
Ha ha ha ha
C'MON! FIGHT BACK A LITTLE!
SHIT, THIS IS BORING.
...

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IT'S POINT-LESS I WON'T DO IT.
IF I DON'T RESIST, IT'S OVER MORE QUICKLY. I CAN'T RESIST.
wha
I HAVE NO MIND.
I HAVE NO BODY.
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?
klunk
grab
I JUST WANT IT TO BE OVER.
PRETTY DAMN VICIOUS.
tupp tupp tupp
GANGING UP ON ONE GUY...
I'M NOT HERE.
kachik
I GUESS YOU'RE ALL GONNA HAVE TO SPEND ETERNITY AT THE BOTTOM OF THE CLASS.

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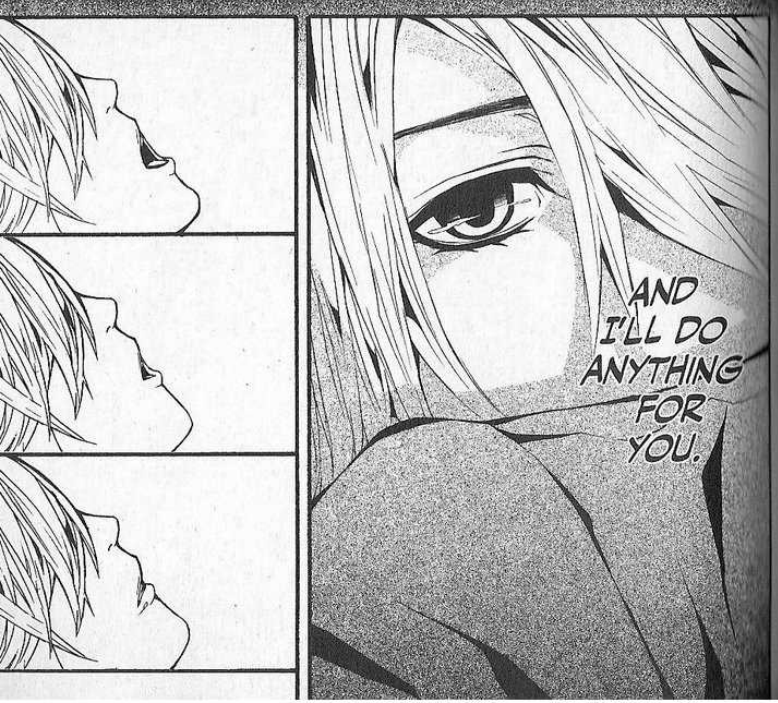

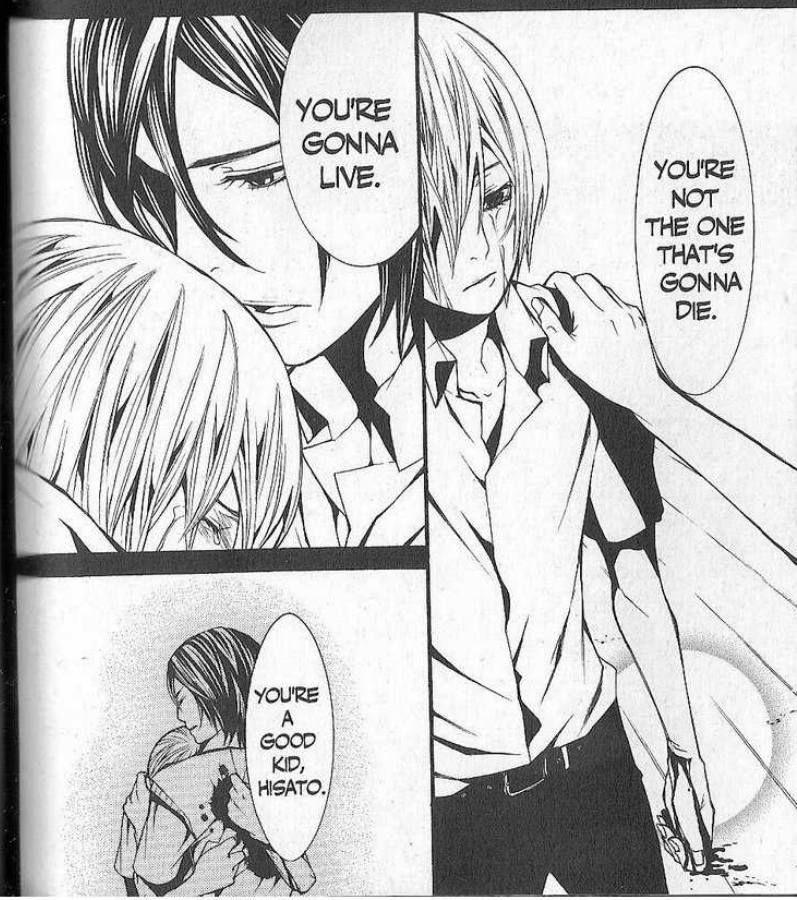

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Act.36

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Z Z Z Z
HE'S ALREADY ASLEEP...
Didn't even take his glasses off.
sluff
THIS HAS TO BE THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN HIM BE THE FIRST TO GO TO SLEEP.
I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED.
twitch
ARE YOU GOING BACK?
...
YEAH, I HAVE SCHOOL.
IT'S YOUR FAULT FOR PUTTING SO DAMN MUCH IN THERE THAT I'M STILL UP.
IF YOU WANT MORE, JUST CALL ME.
suu
WILL YOU AT LEAST HANG OUT UNTIL I GET TO SLEEP?
CAN'T. I'LL BE LATE.
BUT ...
MORE OF THE REDS? OR...
...OF YOU?
...

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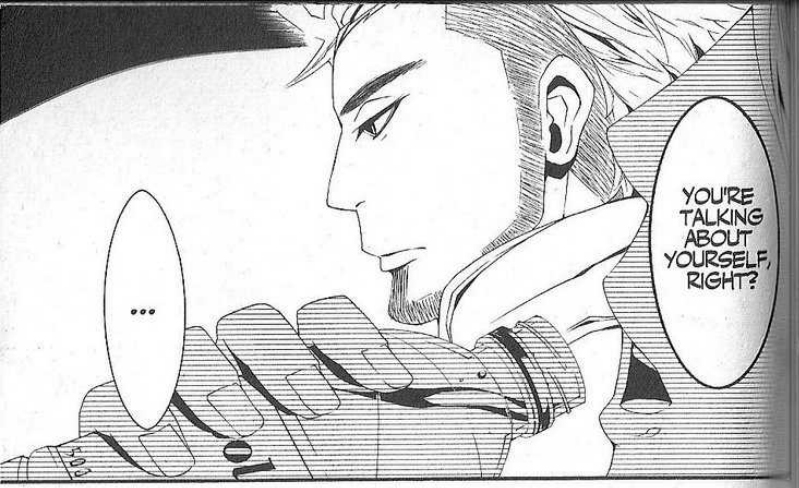

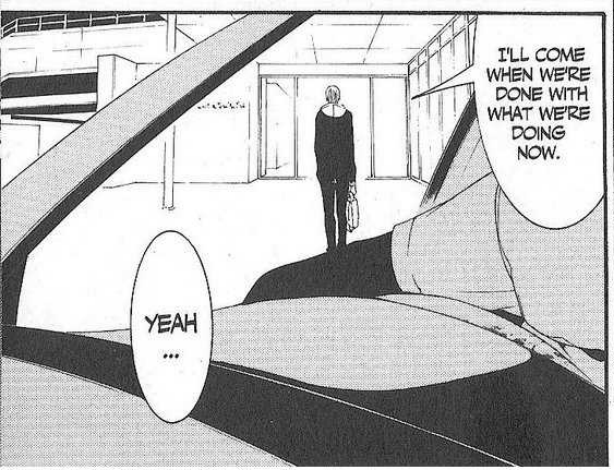

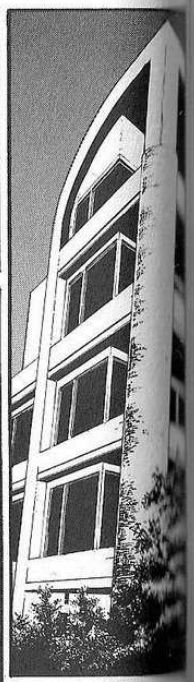

DON'T CALL HIM THAT, KATSUKI!
ANYWAY, I'LL DO WHATEVER I CAN TO HELP OUT.
SORRY ABOUT THAT. CHILL, MAN.
AH... YEAH ...
twitch
HE'S THE BEST IN THE SCHOOL, RIGHT ?
SMART SONUVABITCH CAN PROBABLY GO WHEREVER HE WANTS.

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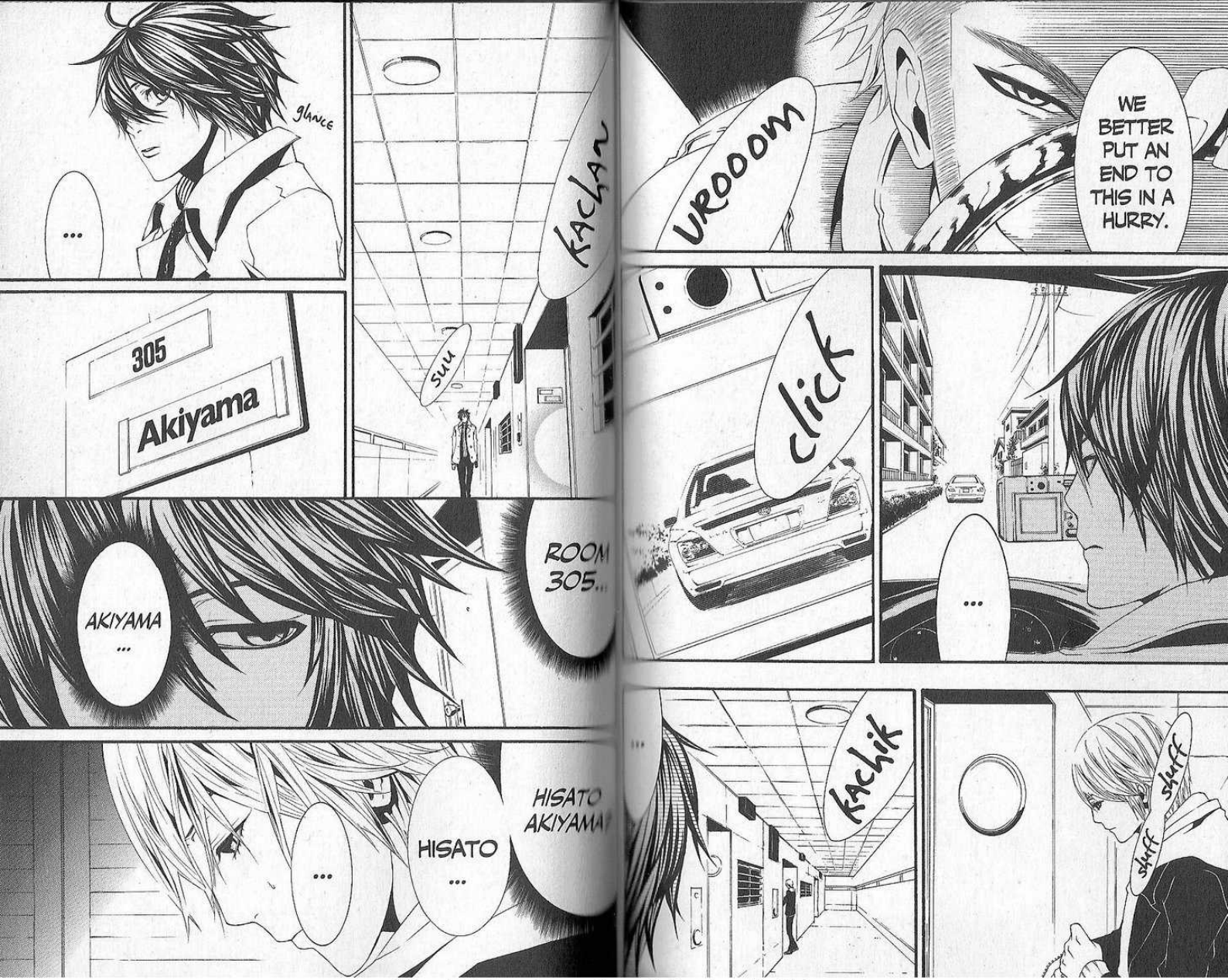

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I'LL GET THE VACUUM.
suu
SHOKI !
SHOKI ...
DID YOU DO ANY RED?
I CLEAN UP OFTEN ENOUGH, BUT I CAN STILL SEE DUST IF I LOOK CLOSELY.
I'M ALREADY LATE, SO LET'S DO THE CLEANING TOMOR-ROW.
suu
AND ANYWAY ...
FLAP
Here.
YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME WHAT THE HOMEWORK WAS, RIGHT?
YEAH... SPEAKING OF THAT--

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SO WHILE WE'RE ON THE SUBJECT, I CALLED TO ASK YOU A FAVOR...
A FAVOR?
SMACKING YOUR FRIENDS... I WASN'T THINKING STRAIGHT
I'M SORRY, MAN.
NAH, I SHOULDN'T HAVE BROUGHT YOU ALONG WITHOUT TELLING YOU WHAT WAS UP.

HELLO ...?
MAN, YOUR VOICE SOUNDS LIKE CRAP.
RRiiiing
DAMN... DROPPED TOO MUCH LAST NIGHT... GOD, THIS HEADACHE...
PARTIED TOO HARD, DRANK TOO MUCH, MAYBE...

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WOW, GETTING MR. TADA ALL FREAKED OUT LIKE THAT...
YOU'VE GOT SOME BALLS!
CAN'T BELIEVE YOU STAYED SO COOL!
I JUST SAID WHAT EVERYBODY WAS THINKING.
ANY-WAY ...

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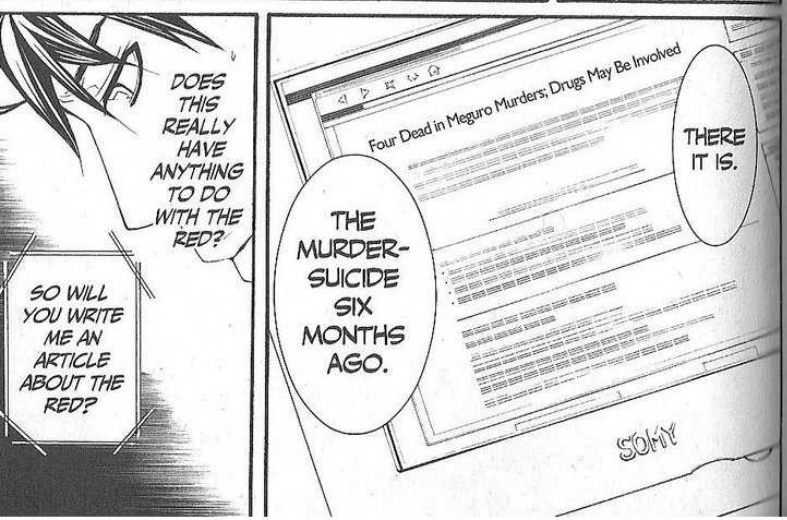
DOES THIS REALLY HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE RED?
SO WILL YOU WRITE ME AN ARTICLE ABOUT THE RED?
Four Dead in Meguro Murders; Drugs May Be Involved
THE MURDER-SUICIDE SIX MONTHS AGO.
THERE IT IS.
SOMY

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THEY FOUND LOADS OF THE RED IN THE GUY'S HOUSE.
HM? I DUNNO, THAT SOUNDS FISHY TO ME.
OF COURSE I DO.
WHAT'S MORE, THERE WAS A SURVIVOR.
YOU GOT A SOURCE FOR THAT?
SURE, SURE.
I GOT IT, I GOT IT.
LOOK INTO IT, MAN, SERIOUSLY!
IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME, TALK TO THE KID.
HUH?
WHAT'RE YOU...?
IT CAN'T BE...
I WAS GONNA ASK YOU TO DO THIS JOB ALL ALONG.
THAT'S WHY I HAD YOU MEET HIM.

HUH?
ACTUALLY, I TOOK THE JOB ON MYSELF, BUT MY PLATE'S REALLY FULL RIGHT NOW...
I THOUGHT YOU COULD PROBABLY USE THE CASH.
AND SINCE YOU JUST GOT OUT OF THE JOINT...
THAT'S A NASTY WAY OF PUTTING IT.
YOU TRIED THE STUFF YOU BOUGHT FROM HISATO, RIGHT?
WELL ... YEAH ...
BUT IT WASN'T AN ESPECIALLY INTERESTING UPPER, REALLY.
I TRIED THE PILLS AND SHOT SOME UP, BUT THERE WASN'T A BIG DIFFERENCE.
IT JUST DOESN'T SEEM LIKE A DRUG WORTH WRITING ABOUT.
THAT'S NOT WHAT'S INTERESTING ABOUT THE DRUG.
DO YOU REMEMBER THAT MURDER-SUICIDE IN MEGURO ABOUT SIX MONTHS BACK?
YEAH... SOME ADDICT KILLED HIS FAMILY AND COMMITTED SUICIDE.
THAT'S THE ONE.

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I STARTED TO LOOK INTO KATSUKI'S RIDICULOUS STORY ABOUT THE MURDER-SUICIDE INCIDENT.
The Meguro Murders: Was Family Strife a Factor?
IT HAPPENED SIX MONTHS AGO.
HIDEMASA MIURA TOOK A KITCHEN KNIFE AND KILLED FOUR MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY...
...HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER AND BOTH PARENTS, WHO LIVED WITH THEM AT THE TIME, BEFORE HANGING HIMSELF.
THE AUTOPSY REVEALED TRACES OF DRUGS IN HIS BODY, AND DRUGS WERE FOUND IN A SUBSEQUENT SEARCH OF THE HOUSE.
THE NEIGHBORS CLAIMED THAT MIURA AND HIS WIFE FOUGHT CONSTANTLY, CONFIRMING THAT THERE WAS AN ESPECIALLY VIOLENT EXCHANGE ON THE DAY OF THE MURDER.
THUS THE MESSY MURDER-SUICIDE, FOLLOWING THE ARGUMENT.
AND THE FIRST PERSON TO DISCOVER THE SCENE...

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...WAS THEIR OLDEST SON, A 16-YEAR-OLD BOY.
SO AFTER HE ATTEMPTS SUICIDE HIMSELF BECAUSE OF THE SHOCK, HE BECOMES A DEALER?
IF SO, THAT WOULD EXPLAIN HIS DEGENERATE LIFE... ALSO...
krck
...PART OF HIS JOB TOO?
WHAT A HERO.
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, WAS THAT...

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IT'S ABOUT SCHOOL... SO I FIGURED IT WAS JUST A FRIEND.
WHO'S HE TALKING TO ON THE PHONE HERE?
HUH?
BEEP
...DON'T COME HOME 'TI MORNING
TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT. I'LL GIVE YOU ANYTHING.
AND THEN, RIGHT AFTER THIS PHONE CALL ...
BEEP
WHIRRR
IT SOUNDS TO ME LIKE HE'S GIVING ORDERS.
YOU THINK "JUST A FRIEND" WOULD TELL HIM WHEN TO COME HOME?
WHICH MEANS WHOEVER HE WAS TALKING TO ON THE PHONE ...
...PROBABLY HAS A PART TO PLAY IN ALL OF THIS.
!
AND THREE MINUTES LATER, HE JUMPS SHINODA.

GOOD TIME TO PUT OUR INFORMATION IN ORDER.
DOESN'T LOOK LIKE HE'S GOING ANYWHERE TODAY.
ANYWAY ...
WHIRRR
SO WHAT'S HE DOING?
shake shake
...!
DID YOU LISTEN THE WHOLE TIME THE KID WAS SCORING WITH SHINODA?
WE HAVE TO GO TO SCHOOL TOMORROW.
I'LL GO WITH YOU.
SURE. BUT...
IT HAS EVERYTHING TO DO WITH IT, IDIOT.
'CAUSE, I MEAN ...
I DIDN'T THINK IT HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE INVESTIGATION, SO...
KLIK

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WHAT ARE THE SALES FOR THIS MONTH?
INCLUDING THE PARTY, 3.28 MILLION YEN.
I LOOK FORWARD TO NEXT MONTH.
THAT WILL DO. WELL DONE, EVERYBODY.

THEY'RE ALL CONNECTED BY THE RED...
SHINODA, KATSUKI, HISATO, THE PHONE MAN, THE MURDER-SUICIDE...
AND I'M GONNA PULL IT ALL UP BY THE ROOTS.
THERE'S A GPS TRACKER ON HIS CAR.
IF ANYTHING CHANGES HERE, CALL ME.
OKAY.
DO YOU KNOW WHERE HE IS?
I'M GONNA KEEP FOLLOWING KATSUKI.
YOU STAY HERE AND WATCH TO SEE IF ANYTHING CHANGES WITH SHINODA AND THE KID.

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THIS IS ALL THANKS TO YOUR COOPERATION.
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO DO ALONE
YOU HAVE MY GRATITUDE.
STILL, WHERE DID YOU MANAGE TO FIND THE CLIENT LIST AND THAT MUCH PRODUCT ...?
SHHHH

SELLING ONLY TO CERTAIN BUYERS, KEEPING THE REST, PARTYING ALL THE TIME...
JUST MAKING MONEY SO EASILY
WE'LL DEPOSIT YOUR COMPENSATION IN THE USUAL ACCOUNTS.
IS IT REALLY OKAY ...?
AND THERE'S PLENTY OF RISK IN SELLING ANY KIND OF DRUGS.
SO THIS IS JUST REASONABLE RECOMPENSE.
IT'S NONSENSE TO THINK THAT YOU HAVE TO SUFFER TO MAKE MONEY.
THANKS TO YOU, SHOKI, I CAN HAVE ANYTHING I WANT.
I'M GRATEFUL YOU INVITED ME.
NO.
RISK ?
IT'S A RUSH. I'D PAY FOR IT.

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FOR YOUR SAKE, I CAN'T SAY.
IT'S BEST IF YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE ROUTE.
RIGHT ?
gulp
THAT WAY, IF WE'RE CAUGHT, EVERYTHING CAN BE MY FAULT.
YOU GUYS SHOULD JUST HAVE A GOOD TIME.
THERE'S PLENTY TO ENJOY IN THE WORLD, EVEN WITHOUT KNOWING EVERYTHING.
AND THE SECRETS ARE FOR YOUR OWN PROTECTION.
...
...HUH?
grab
IF WE STICK TOGETHER WE'LL BE FINE.
WE'LL DO IT TOGETHER.
BUT WE NEED A LOT TO STAY ALIVE, DON'T WE?
SO, HISATO ...
TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT.
thump thump

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KRAK
MORE NOTORIOUS BY FAR THAN THE HIGH OF THIS "CURSED BLOOD DRUG" IS ITS REPUTATION ...
...AND ITS VENOMOUS RED COLOR.
OKAY, HERE'S THE OPENING OF THE PIECE...
I'M GONNA NEED MORE SOON...
I TOOK QUITE A BIT, BUT IT'S NOT KICKING IN...
SUU
IF YOU WANT MORE, JUST CALL ME.
...

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I JUST NEED THE DRUGS AND THE INFORMATION HE HAS.
I'LL BE WAITING.
YEAH, I JUST GOT TO THE PARKING LOT.
SOMEONE CAME TO GET HIM? THE KID AGAIN...?
YEAH, THAT ONE'S DEFINITELY THE KID...
BUT THE OTHER ONE...?

Hisato
I WAS GONNA ASK YOU TO DO THIS JOB ALL ALONG.
THAT MURDERING JUNKIE WAS HIS DAD.
YEAH... YEAH.
!
YESTERDAY WAS A ONE-TIME THING.
WHADDYA THINK YOU'RE DOING, CALLING THE KID?
KIAK
IF I TALK TO HIM DIRECTLY, IT'LL REALLY IMPROVE THE ARTICLE, NATURALLY.
KA-chik
IT DOESN'T MATTER IF HE'S CARRYING. IT'D JUST BE A WAY BETTER STORY IF I TALK TO SOMEONE WHO WAS INVOLVED.
beep
THIS IS FOR WORK.
WHAT I WANT ISN'T THE RED.

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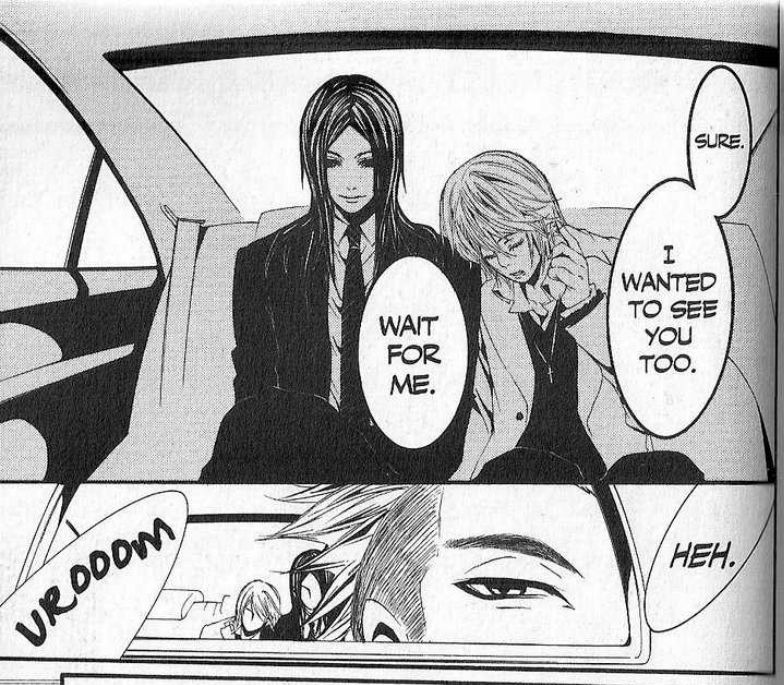

ALREADY? ISN'T THAT A LITTLE FAST?
ARE YOU GONNA BE OKAY?
SU
I, UH... KINDA RAN OUT OF THE RED...
ACTUALLY, I'VE GOT A BIT OF A FAVOR TO ASK...
SHINODA? WHAT'S UP?
UH, YEAH ...
SO... COULD WE MEET UP?
YEAH... ALSO...
I KINDA, UH... WANTED TO ASK YOU SOME-THING....

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USING THAT PRETTY FACE, CONTROLLING PEOPLE TO DO WHATEVER YOU WANT WITH NOTHING MORE THAN A KIND WORD...
...MUST BE A GOOD TIME.
CONTROL-LING?
DON'T MISUNDER-STAND ME, PLEASE.
I'M JUST TELLING PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT TO HEAR.
AND IN EXCHANGE FOR THAT...
WHAT'S WRONG WITH GETTING WHAT I WANT IN RETURN?

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WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED?
I CAN MOVE A LOT MORE PRODUCT THAN THAT OTHER GUY.
ABOUT HOW MANY REGULAR CUSTOMERS DOES HE HAVE?
FIFTY PLUS.
I'VE GOT HIM CARRYING A CELL PHONE WITH THE NUMBERS OF ALL OUR CUSTOMERS ON IT.
WHAT ABOUT NEW CUSTOMERS?
I DON'T LEAVE THAT TO HIM.
THERE'S AN IRANIAN OR SOMEBODY DIRECTLY UNDER THE BIG GUY THAT JUST SELLS ON THE STREET.
I WAS THINKING...
slurp
GOTCHA.
THE DRUGS ARE IN THE USUAL LOCKER.
IF I WERE TO ASK YOU, WOULD I BE ABLE TO GET SOME OF THE RED STUFF?
GO HOME, KID.
...SAY.
IF I WERE TO TALK ABOUT INCREASING THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS WHILE DECREASING SALES AMONG YOUR NETWORK OF BUYERS...
THE KEY YOU GAVE TO THAT GUY A SECOND AGO...
THERE'S A BUNCH OF DRUGS IN THAT LOCKER, RIGHT?
...

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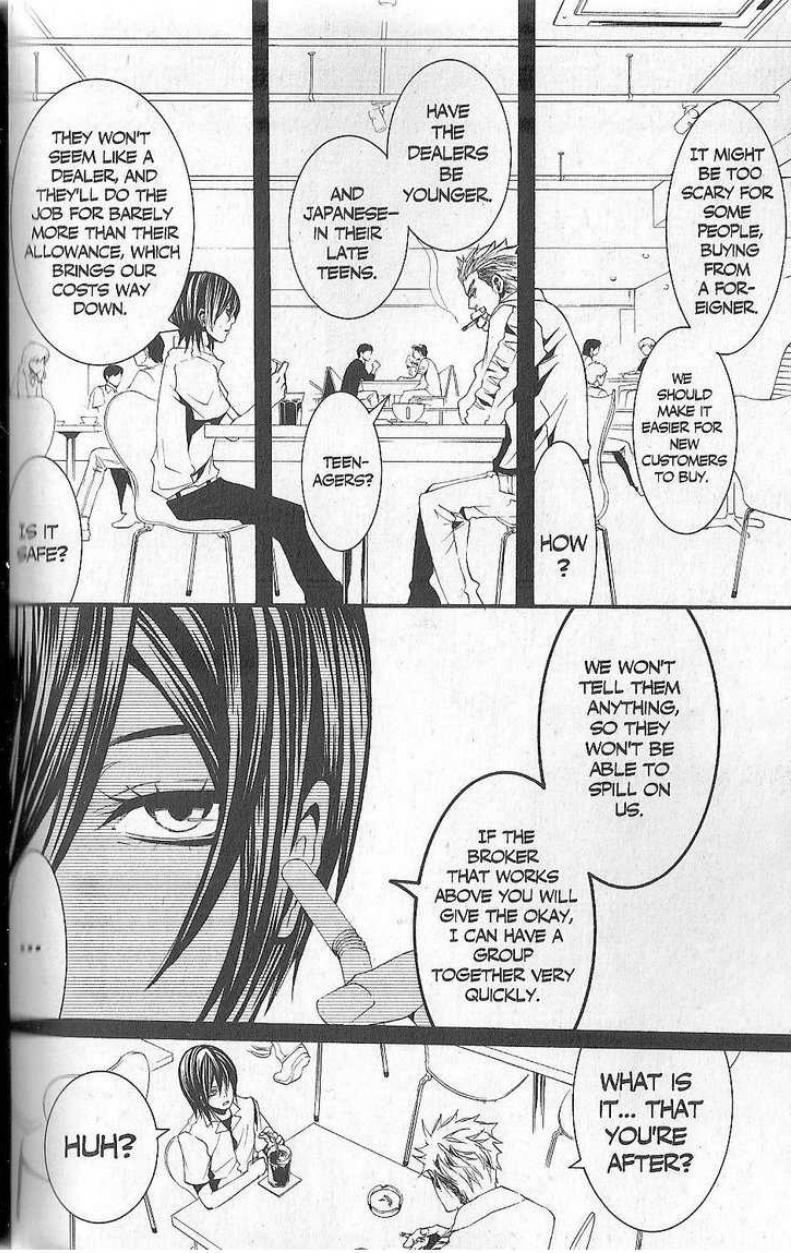
MONEY, OF COURSE.
link link
WELL, I'M GOING TO COLLEGE.
Pupp
!
WHAT'S A KID LIKE YOU NEED THAT KIND OF MONEY FOR?
... sigh
COLLEGE?!
AND THERE'S LIVING EXPENSES, RENT, ELECTRICITY. PLUS, THE TUITION FOR THE SCHOOL I'M AT NOW IS NO JOKE...
NOW WAIT JUST A MINUTE!
ARE YOU STUPID?
WHY?
WHADDYA MEAN, "WHY"? JUST GET YOUR FOLKS TO PAY AND...
MY PARENTS?


THEY WON'T SEEM LIKE A DEALER, AND THEY'LL DO THE JOB FOR BARELY MORE THAN THEIR ALLOWANCE, WHICH BRINGS OUR COSTS WAY DOWN.
IS IT SAFE?
AND JAPANESE— IN THEIR LATE TEENS.
HAVE THE DEALERS BE YOUNGER.
TEEN-AGERS?
IT MIGHT BE TOO SCARY FOR SOME PEOPLE, BUYING FROM A FOR-EIGNER.
WE SHOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR NEW CUSTOMERS TO BUY.
HOW?
WE WON'T TELL THEM ANYTHING, SO THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO SPILL ON US.
IF THE BROKER THAT WORKS ABOVE YOU WILL GIVE THE OKAY, I CAN HAVE A GROUP TOGETHER VERY QUICKLY.
...
HUH?
WHAT IS IT... THAT YOU'RE AFTER?

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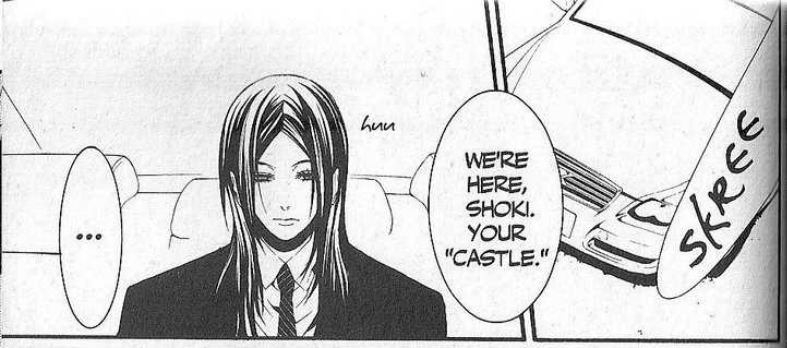

GRAB
I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU--
I HEARD THE TAKE FOR THIS WEEK'S EVENT WAS AMAZING.
URRRRR
KATHUNK
DON'T SWEAT IT.
WEDNESDAY WILL BE HERE SOON.
!
THE BOSS WAS PRETTY HAPPY, IMPRESSED THAT A KID LIKE YOU COULD PULL IT OFF...
NEXT WEDNESDAY... OUR SACRIFICE WILL BE ON THE ALTAR.

NOW YOU'RE THE ONE BEING STUPID.
DON'T LABOR UNDER THE MISCONCEPTION THAT EVERY PARENT IN THIS WORLD TAKES GOOD CARE OF THEIR CHILDREN.
YOU NEED ALL KINDS OF THINGS JUST TO LIVE A NORMAL LIFE.
AND MOST OF THEM YOU CAN GET WITH MONEY. WHEN I GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL, I WANT TO GO TO COLLEGE.
I'M JUST CHOOSING THE MOST EXPEDIENT WAY TO DO THAT.
GRIP
YOU'RE DOING IT BECAUSE YOU'RE SHORT ON CASH TOO, RIGHT?
LIKE, WHAT, YOUR DAY JOB DOESN'T CUT IT?

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--THAT YOU'RE A MUCH SMALLER MAN THAN YOU SEEM.
WOULDN'T EVEN A MAN LIKE THAT BE AN OBSTACLE FOR YOU?
!
klik
YOU... TALK TOO MUCH, KID.
THIS APARTMENT... THIS IS THE PLACE.
VROOM

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!
fuu
REALLY ?
I THINK YOU SHOULD LET YOURSELF GO, JUST ONCE.
GET SO HIGH YOU SEE HEAVEN—SEE SOMETHING NO ONE'S SEEN BEFORE—THEN WRITE ABOUT THAT.
...
I BROUGHT EXTRA SO IT WOULDN'T BE SO BAD WHEN YOU RUN OUT!
YEAH, I GOT THAT.
sluff
LIKE I SAID ...
I THINK YOU'RE CONFUSING IT WITH HELL THAT RED YOU HAVE... IT DOESN'T AGREE WITH ME, I DON'T THINK.
I HAD THE WORST HEAD-ACHE ...

HUH?
...I MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO COME OVER ANY MORE, SOON.
THIS... IT'S ALL THE RED?
YOU TRYING TO GET ME ADDICTED ?
NO, NO, ONLY ...
OH, NEVER MIND.
SO C'MON, DOWN THE HATCH!
NOW, LOOK ...
IF YOU GET TOO OBSESSED WITH SOMETHING, OTHER STUFF TURNS INVISIBLE.
THAT'S NOT GOOD FOR A WRITER.
ARE YOU ALWAYS LIKE THAT, SHINODA ?
YOU NEVER GET STUCK ON SOMETHING OR OBSESSED WITH SOMETHING?
YOU CAN DRINK OR GET HIGH, BUT DON'T LET THE STUFF TAKE OVER...
IT'S ALL ABOUT MODER-ATION.

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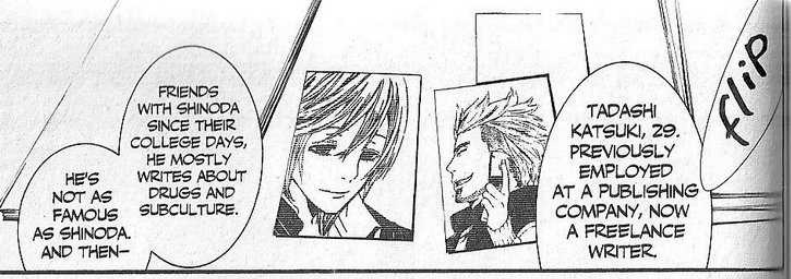
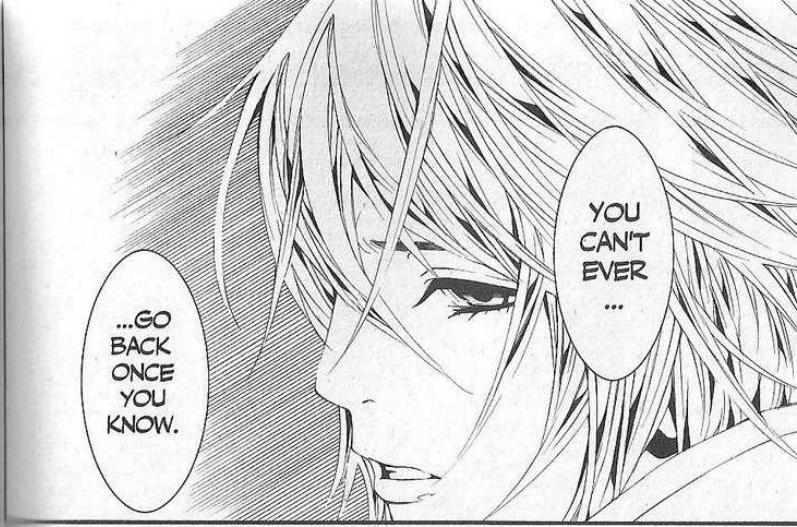

TADASHI KATSUKI, 29. PREVIOUSLY EMPLOYED AT A PUBLISHING COMPANY, NOW A FREELANCE WRITER.
FRIENDS WITH SHINODA SINCE THEIR COLLEGE DAYS, HE MOSTLY WRITES ABOUT DRUGS AND SUBCULTURE.
HE'S NOT AS FAMOUS AS SHINODA. AND THEN-
flip

HISATO AKIYAMA. THE KID MET SHINODA THROUGH KATSUKI AND STARTED SELLING HIM THE RED...
HE'S 17, A SENIOR AT MEGURO EAST HIGH SCHOOL. HIS PARENTS DIVORCED A FEW YEARS AGO, AND NOW HE LIVES WITH HIS MOM IN AN APARTMENT IN MEGURO.
AT LEAST THAT'S THE STORY, BUT APPARENTLY THE NEIGHBORS HAVEN'T SEEN HIS MOTHER IN SOME TIME. PLUS...
SUU

WHO'S THIS?
... ACCORDING TO HAL'S REPORT, THIS GUY'S LIVING THERE TOO.
NAME'S "SHOKI." WE DON'T HAVE DETAILS ON HIM YET, BUT --
WE KNOW HE'S GIVEN INSTRUCTIONS TO HISATO AKIYAMA VIA CELL PHONE, AND ALSO THAT HE, AKIYAMA AND KATSUKI WERE ALL IN THE SAME PLACE AT ONCE.
HM... THIS FACE ...



ZZZZZ
HMMM ...
LOOKS LIKE THE ONLY PEOPLE TO CONTACT SHINODA HAVE BEEN THIS HISATO AKIYAMA AND KATSUKI ...
DO YOU HAVE THEIR BACK-GROUNDS?
YEAH.

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WE KNOW THERE ARE SEVERAL PEOPLE BEING USED AS GOFERS... THEY SEEM TO THINK THEY'RE BEING WATCHED AND DON'T HAND GOODS OVER DIRECTLY.
ANYWAY, THEY PASS ENVELOPES ALONG, AND THAT'S IT.
ENVE-LOPES ...
THERE'RE A LOT OF GOFERS, AND THE FREQUENCY OF HANDOFFS IS VERY RANDOM, SO WE HAVEN'T IDENTIFIED THEM ALL.
BUT THIS GUY.
SUU
HE'S JUST ONE GUY WE WERE FOLLOWING, BUT DURING OUR OBSERVATION WE SPOTTED KURABAYASHI FROM SECTION 1.
Kinda surprisin'.
WHICH MEANS ...
...THAT KATSUKI'S THE SOURCE FOR THE RED...?
GASP
WHOAH!

I FEEL LIKE I'VE SEEN IT... SOME-WHERE ...
KACHAK
GOOD WORK, EVERY-BODY!
AH, ISOBE.
THAT'S GOOD TO HEAR.
IT WAS A REAL ROUGH JOB.
DIDN'T GET ANYTHING AT FIRST.
THERE'S BEEN SOME PROGRESS IN THE CASE, SO I'M FINALLY HERE TO REPORT.
HOW'S SECTION 2'S INVESTI-GATION INTO THE RED GOING?
SUU
WE'RE FLUSHING OUT THE CONNECTIONS OF MIURA, THE GUY THAT DID THE MURDER-SUICIDE, AND THE IRANIAN WE THINK WAS INVOLVED WITH HIM.

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WHERE'D YOU GET THIS PICTURE?
WHY IS THIS KID WITH KATSUKI ...?
YOU MEAN HISATO AKIYAMA?
NO, I MEAN THIS ONE WITH THE BLACK HAIR...
HISATO AKIYAMA?
THIS IS SHOKI KASAHARA.
"SHOKI ..."
OH, SORRY... AFTER THE INCIDENT HE WAS TAKEN IN BY RELATIVES AND CHANGED HIS FAMILY NAME.
HE WAS FORMERLY SHOKI MIURA.
THE FIRST PERSON TO DISCOVER THE MURDER-SUICIDE, AND THE STEPSON OF THE MURDERER, HIDEMASA MIURA.

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ohno
ohno
EIGHTY POINTS? GOOD FOR YOU, KAZUMI!
ha ha ha
AND WHAT ABOUT YOUR SON?
OH... SHOKI'S HOPE-LESS ...
I GUESS HE ONLY GOT HIS FATHER'S WEAK BRAINS.
...
I SEE... IT'S MY FAULT ...
I HAVE TO BE A BETTER SON...
HA HA HA HA HA

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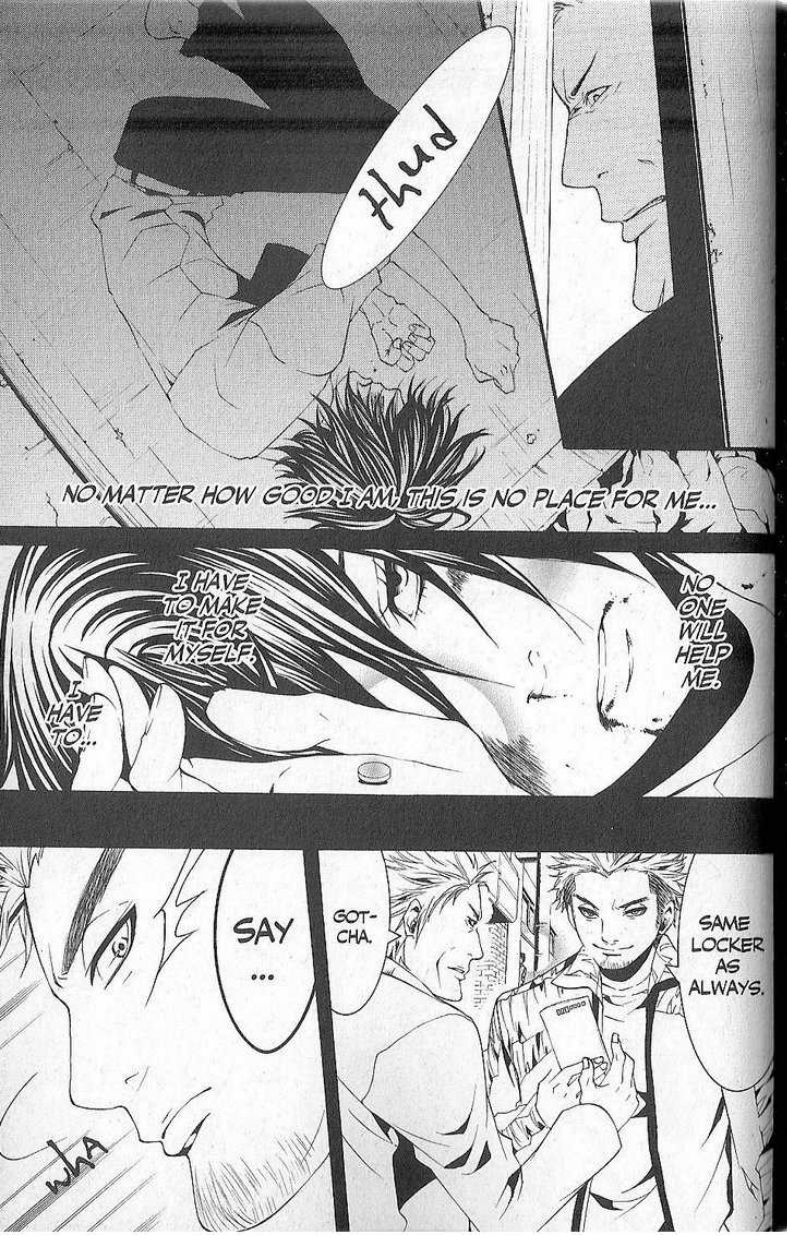
thud
NO MATTER HOW GOOD I AM, THIS IS NO PLACE FOR ME...
I HAVE TO MAKE IT FOR MYSELF.
I HAVE TO...
NO ONE WILL HELP ME.
SAY ...
GOT-CHA.
SAME LOCKER AS ALWAYS.
wha

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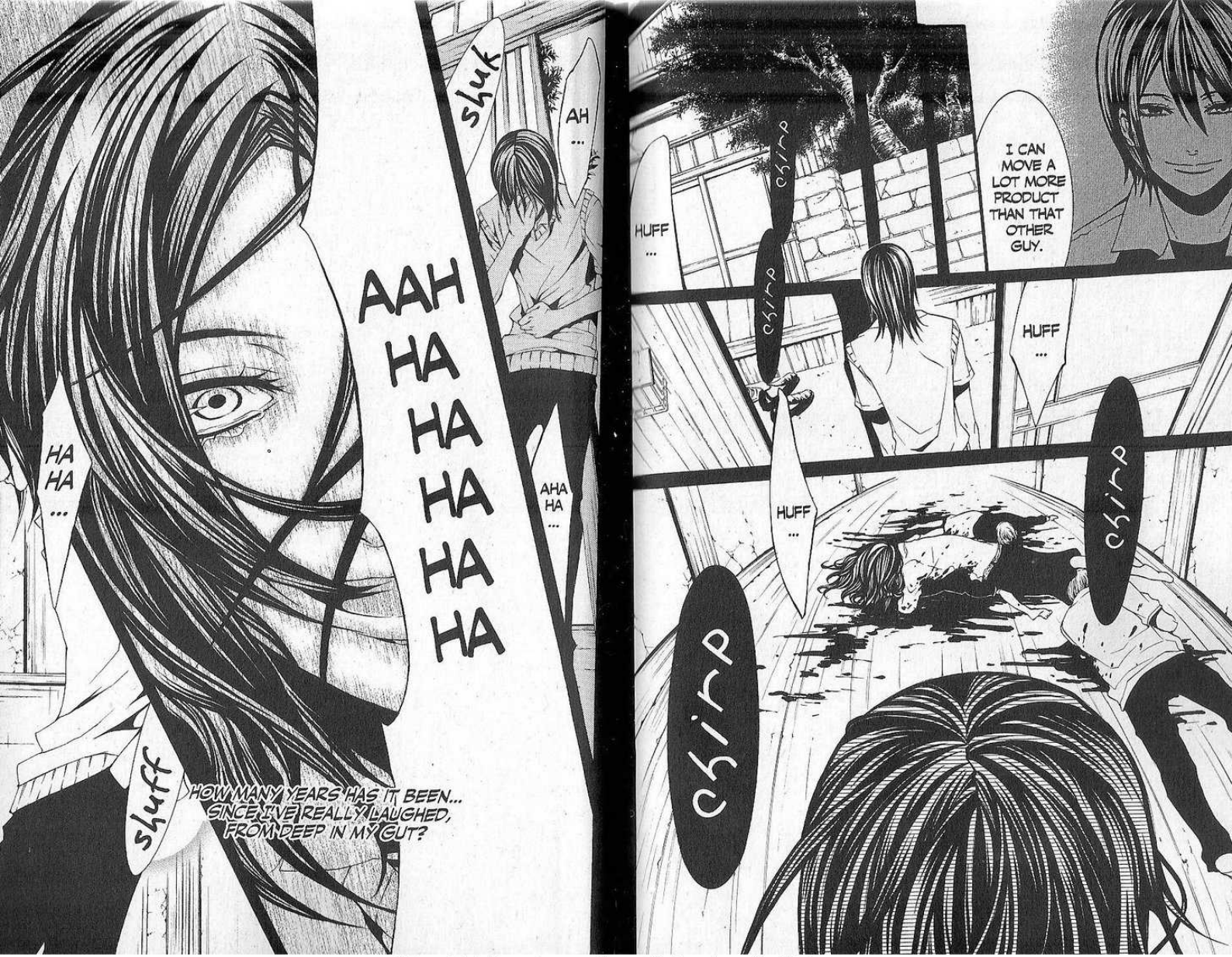

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FOR AS LONG AS I COULD REMEMBER, MY PARENTS WERE ALWAYS FIGHTING.
DON'T THINK I DON'T KNOW ALL ABOUT IT!
YOU WENT TO THAT WOMAN'S PLACE.
...
WORK KEPT ME LATE— WHAT COULD I DO?
WHAT TIME DO YOU THINK IT IS?
SUU
THAT WASN'T A TRAGEDY.
AND I STILL THINK SO.
PASHIK

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...
SHE SAID IT FOR YEARS.
AND I STARTED TO WANT TO DO IT. IT WAS WEIRD...
gulp
I JUST WANTED IT ALL TO BE OVER.
I'M NOT HERE.
I JUST WANT IT TO BE OVER SOON.
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, ALL I THOUGHT ABOUT WAS DYING.
AND THEN...
...HE APPEARED.

I'M SORRY ...
HISATO !
WHAT TIME DO YOU THINK IT IS?
SO WHEN MY DAD DITCHED US, MOM'S RESENTMENT HAD NOWHERE ELSE TO GO AND LANDED ON ME.
SHI-NODA ...
SO THOSE SCARS ON YOUR WRIST ARE...
HAVE YOU EVER WANTED TO JUST END YOUR LIFE?
!
"I WISH I'D NEVER HAD YOU."
SHE USED TO SAY THAT ALL THE TIME.
!

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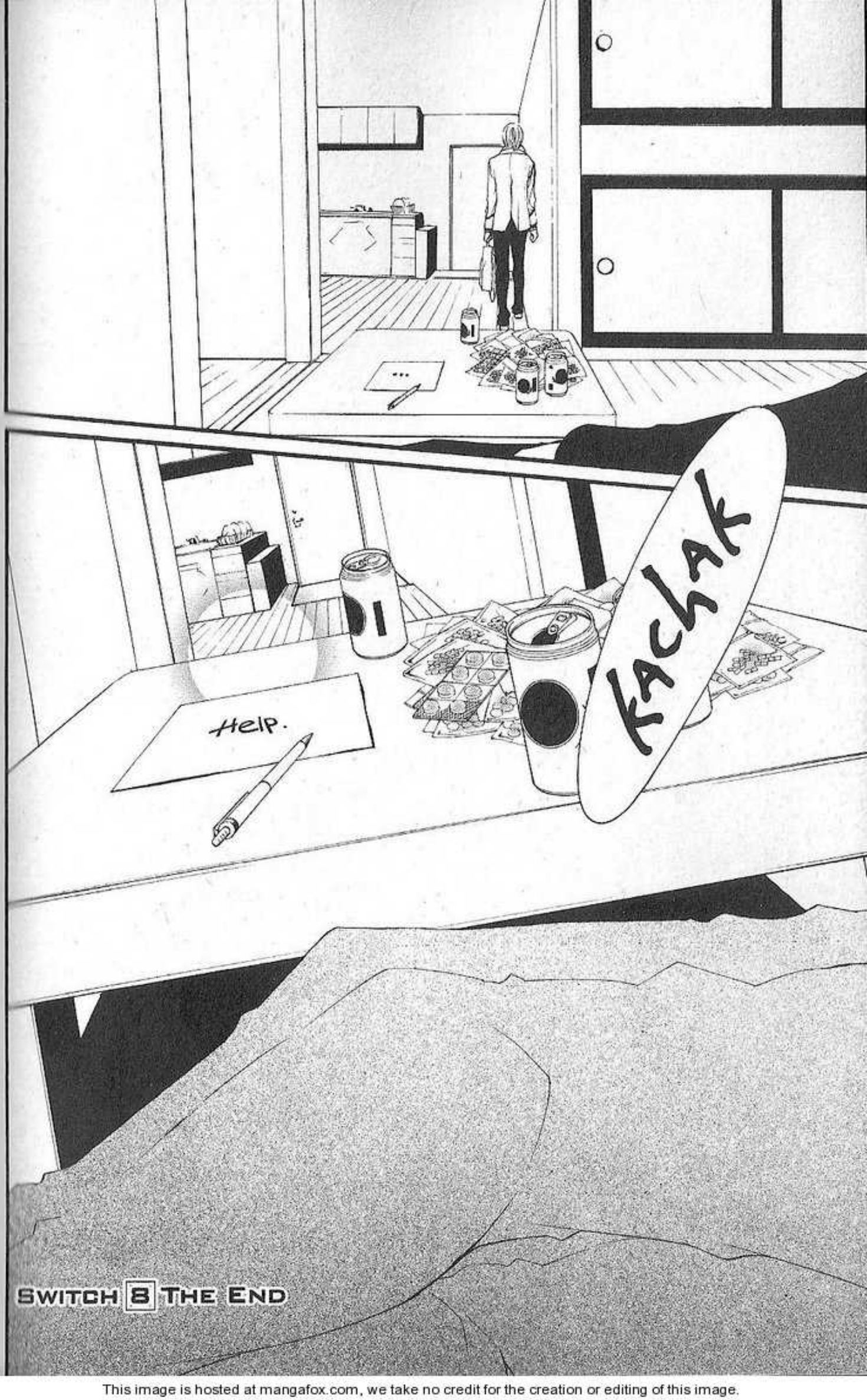

SWITCH 8 THE END

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